

WE CLAIM:

1. A method of forwarding a communication in a telecommunications system from a called address to a forwarding address, comprising the steps of:
designating the forwarding address;
receiving the communication;
routing the communication to a central forwarding repository;
saving the communication at the central forwarding repository; and
routing the communication from the central forwarding repository to the forwarding address.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:
retrieving the communication from the central forwarding repository.

3. The method of Claim 2, whereby prior to the step of retrieving the communication from the central forwarding repository, receiving a personal identification number for authenticating a retrieving party.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of receiving the communication includes receiving a telephone call.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of receiving the communication includes receiving a non-audio formatted communication.

6. The method of Claim 5, further comprising the step of:

at the central forwarding repository, converting the communication from the non-audio formatted communication to an audio formatted communication.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein the step of receiving a non-audio formatted communication includes receiving a facsimile transmission.

8. The method of Claim 6, wherein the step of receiving a non-audio formatted communication includes receiving an electronic message.

9. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of designating the forwarding address includes designating a forwarding telephone directory number for receiving the communication.

10. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:
at the central forwarding repository, capturing caller identification information for the communication.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the step of routing the communication from the central forwarding repository to the forwarding address includes providing identification information for the communication at the forwarding address.

12. The method of Claim 11, wherein the step of providing identification information includes providing an audio-formatted facsimile transmission header message.

13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the step of providing caller identification information further comprises the step of providing an audio-formatted source address for an electronic message.

14. A method of forwarding an electronic message in a telecommunications system, comprising the steps of:

designating a forwarding address for the electronic message;
receiving the electronic message;
routing the electronic message to a central forwarding repository;
at the central forwarding repository, converting the electronic message from a text formatted message to an audio formatted message;

saving the audio formatted message at the central forwarding repository;
and

routing the audio formatted message from the central forwarding repository to the forwarding address.

15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of:
at the central forwarding repository, converting a source address for the electronic message from a text formatted address to an audio formatted address; and
routing the text formatted address to the forwarding address with the electronic message.

16. The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of:
receiving the audio formatted message at the forwarding address.

17. The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of:
retrieving the audio formatted message from the central forwarding repository.

18. The method of Claim 17, whereby prior to the step of retrieving the audio formatted message from the central forwarding repository, receiving a personal identification number for authenticating a retrieving party.

19. The method of Claim 14, wherein the step of designating the forwarding address includes designating a forwarding telephone directory number for receiving the audio formatted message.

20. A method of forwarding a facsimile transmission in a telecommunications system, comprising the steps of:

designating a forwarding address for the facsimile transmission;
receiving the facsimile transmission;

routing the facsimile transmission to a central forwarding repository;
at the central forwarding repository, converting the facsimile transmission from an image formatted transmission to an audio formatted transmission;
saving the audio formatted transmission at the central forwarding repository; and
routing the audio formatted transmission from the central forwarding repository to the forwarding address.

21. The method of Claim 20, further comprising the step of:
receiving the audio formatted transmission at the forwarding address.

22. The method of Claim 20, wherein the step of converting the facsimile transmission from an image formatted transmission to an audio formatted transmission includes,

converting only an address header message of the facsimile transmission to an audio formatted transmission;

retaining a body portion of the facsimile transmission as an image formatted transmission; and

whereby the step of routing the audio formatted transmission from the central forwarding repository to the forwarding address includes routing only the audio formatted address header to the forwarding address, and

retaining the image formatted body portion of the facsimile transmission at the central forwarding repository.

23. The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of:
retrieving the audio formatted transmission from the central forwarding repository.

24. The method of Claim 23, whereby prior to the step of retrieving the audio formatted transmission from the central forwarding repository, receiving a personal identification number for authenticating a retrieving party.

25. The method of Claim 22, wherein the step of designating the forwarding address includes designating a forwarding telephone directory number for receiving the audio formatted message.

26. The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of forwarding the audio-formatted transmission to a second forwarding address.

27. The method of Claim 26, wherein the second forwarding address comprises a facsimile receiving device.

28. A method of forwarding communications in a telecommunications system, comprising the steps of:

designating telephone calls, facsimile transmissions or electronic messages received at a specified address to be forwarded to a forwarding address;

routing the telephone calls, facsimile transmissions and electronic messages received at the specified address to a central forwarding repository;

at the central forwarding repository, converting the electronic messages from text formatted messages to audio formatted messages;

at the central forwarding repository, converting the facsimile transmissions from image formatted transmissions to audio formatted transmissions;

saving the telephone calls, audio formatted facsimile transmissions and audio formatted electronic messages at the central forwarding repository;

routing the telephone calls, the audio formatted messages, and the audio formatted facsimile transmissions from the central forwarding repository to the forwarding address for receipt by a forwarding party.

29. The method of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:
retrieving the telephone calls, the audio formatted messages, and the audio formatted facsimile transmissions from the central forwarding repository.

30. The method of Claim 29, whereby prior to the step of retrieving the communication from the central forwarding repository, receiving a personal identification number for authenticating a retrieving party.

31. The method of Claim 28, wherein the step of designating telephone calls, facsimile transmissions and electronic messages received at a specified address to be forwarded to a forwarding address includes designating a forwarding telephone directory number as the forwarding address.

32. A system for forwarding a communication in a telecommunications system from a called address to a forwarding address, comprising:

a switch operative

to receive a forwarding address designation;

to receive the communication;

to route the communication to a central forwarding repository;

the central forwarding repository operative

to save the communication; and

to route the communication to the forwarding address.

33. The system of Claim 32, whereby the central forwarding repository is further operative

to receive a personal identification number for authenticating a retrieving party; and

to provide the saved communication to the retrieving party upon authentication of the retrieving party.

34. The system of Claim 32, whereby the central forwarding repository is further operative

to receive the communication in a non-audio format; and

to convert the communication from the non-audio format communication to an audio format.

35. The system of Claim 34, whereby the central forwarding repository is further operative

to receive a facsimile transmission; and

to convert the facsimile transmission from an image format to an audio format for routing to the forwarding address.

36. The system of Claim 34, whereby the central forwarding repository is further operative

to receive an electronic message; and

to convert the electronic message from an image format to an audio format for routing to the forwarding address.